

Manifesto



PIRATE
PARTY UK

SHARING
IS CARING



PIRATE
PARTY UK

Foreword by the Leader of Pirate Party UK

Democracy is in crisis in the United Kingdom. Whether it is online or on the doorstep, people are telling us that they feel alienated, ignored, that they have given up voting as it changes nothing.



It's this sense of powerlessness over the forces that shape our lives and the space around us that is so worrying in the UK today. Creeping privatisation means all aspects of our society are being divided up and parcelled out. It can be impossible to find out who is responsible for the most basic aspects of our environment, public spaces and services, let alone get anyone to do anything about it.

We are constantly under surveillance, whether it is by Europe's biggest army of CCTV cameras or by companies like ATOS checking up on us. In a country of physical barriers, many find the online world a place to reclaim some freedom. But here too we are increasingly to be watched and restricted, while government and courts gather powers to disconnect us, block websites and monitor what we say and do.

At the heart of Pirate Party politics is the right for everyone to share knowledge and take an equal part in society. That is the way to take control over the world around us. That is what we are setting out here.

This document is the result of the input and debate of thousands of people. It's the UK's first crowd-sourced manifesto. I've always believed in a politics that is done with people not to people, this is what we have delivered here. The process has been exciting not just because it has been unique in British politics, but also because it has resulted in a manifesto that really does offer a chance to break the cycle of alienation and powerlessness.

The result is a broad range of principles, that I and our candidates will be proud to stand on.

Foreword by the Leader of Pirate Party UK

I know I'll be proud to support holding banks to account, and getting money to where it is needed in the economy.

- I am proud to support securing the NHS for now and the future, and acting against pharmaceutical company greed.
- I am proud to support an education system that is life long and values knowledge and development not tests and benchmarks.
- I am proud to support extending the scope of Freedom of Information and open data.
- I am proud to argue for government based on facts and evidence, not anecdote and lazy ideology.

The core of the Pirate Party's beliefs remain unchanged. That digital rights belong at the heart of politics. That civil liberties need strengthening and defending. That freedom of speech is vital for a thriving democracy. That intellectual property laws must be updated to keep pace with technology.

This manifesto builds on the principles that are our foundation. This is a journey we will continue on, to make a whole range of proposals for a country where everyone really can get their fair share.

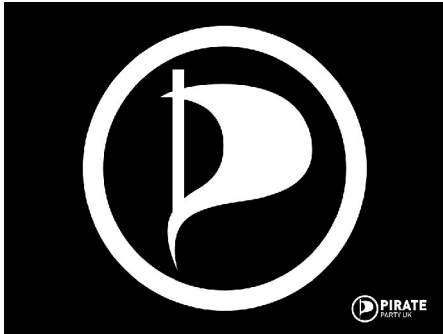
We seem to live in an age where politicians promise much, but all too often stand for nothing. There can be no doubt what the Pirate Party stands for. We stand to break the feeling of powerlessness in British politics, to truly give people their own voice.





Pirate Party Candidates Finlay Archibald and Rob Harris with Scotland Coordinator Laura-Anne Riach

Our Principles



The policies that you will find in this manifesto are based upon 7 simple principles that guide our approach to all aspects of governance. Our principles are the basis of our political agenda and can be applied to any and all areas of public and private life. They determine whether we can or cannot support a specific initiative and they should be sufficient to determine our position on any number of issues, whether outlined in this document or not:

1. Our society is built upon the sharing of knowledge, ideas and culture. It is furthered by freedom of thought and expression, and protected by the rule of law. The Pirate Party exists to ensure the preservation and development of these foundations.
2. Human dignity is inviolable. Each of us has a right to life and to live, to freedom of thought and self determination, and to participate in society.
3. Everyone is equal under the law. We all have a say in the structure and processes of governance and the right to know what is done on our behalf.
4. Respect for our private and family life by government and society is fundamental and we all have freedom of choice in our associations and relationships.
5. To be free to participate in society everyone must have access to justice, education and such services and infrastructure required for life within it.
6. To ensure the security of our society it is the responsibility of the government to provide for its defence, the mechanisms of justice and such services and infrastructure required to meet its needs.
7. We will act on the basis of evidence, with the consent of society through democracy, in the interests of all.

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Digital Economy and Digital Rights

Everybody should benefit from the digital revolution. At the moment the UK is behind the curve. Rather than focusing on access and capability, the Government has decided to limit our rights online, hampering our ability to make use of the internet to its fullest and hamstringing business.

We need to invest in truly world class infrastructure. The goal is fibre to every home and business, and public WiFi where it is needed. The rolling out of public WiFi is a priority and, like street lighting, it is possible if we want it to happen. Together we can get Britain connected.

Laws like the Digital Economy Act threaten to cut off whole families from digital opportunity, all to support businesses that have failed to adapt to the reality of a connected world. It's time to stop the blocking of web sites. It is arbitrary censorship with no positive benefits. Rather than putting unnecessary burdens on digital businesses, we can get the real digital economy moving, creating new jobs and encouraging small businesses to export internationally via the Internet. We can grow the digital economy and make it possible for all to take part.

Consumers should be protected. The problem of misleading broadband advertising should be tackled, with a right to pay only for the broadband connectivity actually delivered. The 'locking' of electronic devices should be seen as anti-competitive. The principle of a neutral and open Internet should be protected. That is how business and our shared culture will grow.

Broadband access for all

At present every person in the UK has access to basic telephone services, so BT or, if you live in Hull, Kingston Communications, must provide you with a fixed phone service at an affordable price. If you are disabled, providers have additional responsibilities to ensure that you have access to communications. We will extend the requirement to provide basic telephone services to a requirement to provide a minimum level of broadband service and extend this responsibility to all providers who operate in the UK.

We know that the UK's future success depends on a modern broadband infrastructure supporting a free and open Internet, but to make the most of it we must aim to end the "Digital Divide" and ensure that everyone benefits of being part of a connected information society.

Provide public WiFi

We will promote the provision of free public WiFi as well as the provision of Internet access in community centres and libraries by local authorities. At present a significant portion of us have limited access to the Internet and the benefits that access provides. Providing access where it is otherwise limited is a good initial step to reducing and eventually ending the digital divide.

Achieve significant copyright reform

A fair and balanced copyright regime that is suitable for the 21st century is an absolute necessity for the UK to remain competitive in a global economy that is built upon ideas and innovation. Copyright should give artists and innovators the chance to make money from their work; however, that needs to be balanced with the rights of society as a whole.

Reduce copyright terms

We will reduce the duration of copyright to 10 years, closer to the original duration of 14 years, reflecting the much greater ease with which works can now be made and distributed.

Shorter copyright will encourage artists to keep on creating new work; will allow new art forms, such as mash-ups; and will stop big businesses from relying on large back-catalogues rather than investing in new content.

Our 10 year copyright length will include within it a renewal after 5 years, allowing works in which the creator is no longer interested to fall into the public domain after 5 years.

Prevent 'restarting the clock'

By ensuring that new copyrights are not created unless the new work represents a substantial change, we will remove the loophole in current copyright law that allows 'restarting the clock' by simply moving content to a new format or making an incremental change to it.

More rights over media

We will legalise the use of copyright works where no money changes hands, which will return to the people various rights including:

A right to "format shift" (for example, buying a CD then copying it to a portable media player such as an MP3 player or phone);

A right to share files between friends and peers (which provides free advertising that is essential for less well-known artists);

We will help create an environment in which we can all enjoy and share our cultural heritage free from the threat of legal action or censorship.



1.

Limit digital rights management

There is an urgent need to raise public awareness about Digital Rights Management (DRM) technology. We believe the public needs to be protected from products that can be remotely turned off by the manufacturer, products that 'phone home' and would therefore stop working if the manufacturer went bankrupt, or products that are 'region coded'. We will require that any product sold in the UK that includes a DRM mechanism is stored in without DRM in escrow against a time where access to DRM versions is no longer possible.

Fix the Digital Economy Act

We will repeal sections 3 to 18 of the Digital Economy Act 2010 and strengthen the current protections against excessive or frivolous lawsuits for copyright infringement.

Expand the Open Government License

The Open Government Licence will be expanded to all government funded data and material. All maps, statistics and other data that have been created or collated by the government will be released in open formats, giving the public access to research for which they have already paid. An exception will be made for cases that have national security or privacy concerns.

Make national events accessible

The current list of important national events that cannot be exclusively broadcast by pay TV services must be maintained and expanded. We will introduce a mandate that such events be available via both broadcast and online distribution.

Implement the Open Source Action Plan

The government's existing but widely ignored Open Source Action Plan will be properly implemented across government, and will be promoted to the public and private sectors. The Action Plan encourages the use of free and open source software, saving money where practical and economically viable.



Unbundle technology

The bundling of services with hardware has created artificial barriers to entry in a number of markets in the last decade. To ensure that innovation is possible and to improve competition we would aim to introduce a requirement that the providers of bundled services, software and hardware products price and offer each component individually as well as in a bundle.

We will treat locking of electronic devices, whether the locking of software to hardware or hardware to a service, as an anti-competitive act.

Economy and Jobs

The UK is in a dire financial position right now, We have not managed to dig ourselves out of the hole caused by the bank crisis under Labour, and many of us are still suffering from the consequences. We have not put protections in place to prevent the same mistakes from happening again. We must hold the banks to account. Banks and their management should be liable for catastrophic mistakes, so that they take greater care with our money.

The Government wants to stop short of this. It is time for strict liability for bank directors to prevent our economy from being treated like a casino.

The tax system should be clear and transparent and focused on jobs and innovation. We need to take action to reduce tax avoidance and act on tax evasion. A dedicated tax minister with clear responsibilities to us all would help to make sure all businesses and individuals are playing their part and that no group faces an excessive burden.

It is important to realise that we can't simply borrow or tax-cut our way to growth: we have to invent our way to it. We need to focus on what works. Small businesses provide a massive amount of employment and tax revenue We should ensure that they are not prevented from innovating but encouraged to do so.

We need a better ways to reduce poverty and support people when they need support. We will be investigating how a Citizens Income could be implemented in the UK and will promote reforms that would lead to such a scheme being the back bone of welfare reform in the future.

We see more economic activity and more jobs from small firms, yet tax breaks are more available to large corporates. Not only is that unfair, but it is promoting businesses that aren't beneficial to the UK at the cost of supporting those that are.

Economy and Jobs

The economy is built upon education and individual effort. We need to empower individuals. School should not just be about work experience but about "creating your own job" experience. We must remove Intellectual Property laws that are hampering growth. It's time to stop the tide of over-reaching patents and trivial lawsuits that are tying up new ideas and start-ups.

Fair Tax brackets

There are continuous debates about the specifics of tax brackets as well as arguments around when they should be increased or lowered. We will propose a scheme whereby income tax brackets and personal allowances are calculated as multiples or fractions of the median income and float with the economy. As the economy improves, more people on low incomes would be removed from the tax system; if the economy deteriorates taxes increase for all, but with a smaller impact at the bottom of the income scale. Individuals earning less than half of the national median income will not pay income taxes.

Reform the patents system

We believe that patents exist to reward the inventors of truly outstanding ideas, not to allow big businesses to stifle competition with an ever-growing tide of trivial, incomprehensible, overreaching patents.

We will stop the abuse of patent law by raising the bar on how innovative an idea has to be before it can be patented, and by prohibiting patents on software, business methods, concepts and works of nature.

We will require a working model to exist before a patent is granted and we will strictly enforce the current rule that patents are invalid if they are "obvious to someone skilled in the art".

We will allow and encourage more competition in the manufacturing of patented devices by introducing a system of compulsory patent licensing, and we will provide exemptions to patent law for non-commercial use, personal study and academic research.

Personal liability for directors

Directors of large public companies should have a personal liability for their actions and decisions. This move will ensure that there is a greater personal incentive for the leadership of large business beyond a short term financial incentive.

A “Robin Hood Tax” on financial institutions

A tiny tax on stock market transactions would raise significant revenue and act as a disincentive to engage in activities like high-frequency trading. It will be our aim to promote a coordinated international effort to implement such a scheme.

Create jobs

The current approach to economic stimulus (providing large amounts of money to certain institutions in the hope that it will eventually lead to increased lending and so the expansion of businesses and the creation of jobs) is not effective. It gives an advantage to a specific sector of our economy by allowing the financial sector to shape the economy of the UK more broadly. The economy will only recover when people have secure jobs and enough money to live, spend in the economy, and invest in their pensions and savings. Making large numbers of people redundant in the hope that the private sector will simply create jobs is not the right course of action. We will advocate a more direct approach to economic recovery and creating jobs.

The UK faces a number of challenges, from a lack of social housing to poor transport and communications links, that could be dealt with by initiating infrastructure projects. The product of such infrastructure projects would provide a long term benefit to the UK and stimulate future growth. We could increase the rate of high speed broadband expansion, improve public transport (particularly outside London) and make Britain a world leader in renewable energy. This will allow us to reduce unemployment and provide skills to people who have lost jobs in other parts of the economy.

Make work, work

Currently, 1 in 3 young people in the UK live in poverty, and 1 in 5 young adults are unemployed, yet even when they do find work at the minimum wage, they are paid far less than older workers. Nobody should be costed out of an adequate standard of living, especially not on the basis of age. We will object to discrimination within the benefits system for anyone not in full time education or retirement.

Implement a land value tax

The tax system is broken and too easily evaded. A land value tax would raise more from the rich without penalising the poor, whilst at the same time being much harder to dodge than traditional income tax. It would also support economic productivity, as those who rely on existing assets for income would be charged, whereas those who work for a living would not. The Pirate Party would support a land value tax.

No-one will pay more tax than those earning more than them

Taxation should be fair to the taxpayer. Those earning the least should not only pay a smaller amount of money in tax, but should always have a lower marginal tax rate than those earning more than they do. That marginal tax rate should apply to all taxes on income, whether from employment, investments or other instruments.

We would aim to simplify the tax system to ensure that the tax system is as fair as possible. We want everyone to keep as much of the money that they earn as we can, but it is vital that it is the impact of taxation that is fair, not simply the amounts involved.

Remove commercial restrictions on suburbia

It is important that local and national governments do not prevent people from setting up businesses or innovating. We will ensure that there are no unreasonable barriers preventing home-owners from making the best possible use of their houses and gardens for work. We believe it is important that, within existing limitations on noise and environmental harm, we remove restrictions that prevent people from doing business from and with their homes

Encourage entrepreneurship through micro-businesses

We will promote micro-business as a driver for innovation and competition in the British economy. A micro-business is a very small business with a single owner and no employees, one with a turnover of less than £2500/year.

The first £1500 of income earned from micro-business would be tax free, nor would the income from such an operation have an impact on benefits.

Reduce tax evasion

To reduce tax evasion, we will aim to increase penalties for engaging in schemes aimed to evade tax unlawfully. The penalty for tax evasion should be sufficiently punitive that getting caught once outweighs the benefits of having engaged in evasion over a period of years.

Put the Treasury's economic models online

Hiding economic data and the basis on which predictions are made is bad for confidence and makes it harder anyone to challenge the decisions made by government. The Pirate Party will ensure that information that aids analysis and planning, like the Treasury's economic models, are available to anyone via the Internet or at request.

No more bank bailouts

The bailing out of British banks during and shortly after the bank crisis by the government may have shored up some banks, but at a huge cost. We don't think that banks should be allowed to profit from risky behaviour.

We must draw a line under the 'too big to fail culture' and resolve that the UK taxpayer is no longer required to prop-up incompetent or overstretched banks. There should be no more 'bankers' bailouts.

The government should still guarantee the deposits of savers at high street banks via an insurance scheme, but the focus of any intervention must be the banks' customers, not the banks themselves or their shareholders. To make it less likely that retail banks become insolvent, we will propose limitations on their activities and introduce personal liability for their directors, as well as encouraging shareholders in promoting safe practices.

Make pensions fairer

At present pensions providers are taking large amounts of the money that individuals save for their retirement in fees and commissions, often with a lack of clarity as to what such fees are for or whether they will be applied at all.

Given the importance of saving for retirement, we would aim to disincentivise providers from charging excessive fees and ensure that any costs associated are clearly stated up front. All pension funds should have to state their costs in a clear, unobfuscated way at the point when a pension is set up. We will introduce a right to move pension savings to providers with lower overheads without penalty.

We will work to reduce the cost of saving for retirement and try to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to quality pension products. All pension schemes must recognise same sex couples, and provide what pensioners need.

Bring in a tax minister

The UK's tax system is overcomplicated. There is a lack of clear responsibility for regulatory and implementation failures, and failures in the administration of tax credits is often seen as an administrative fact of life. We will aim to make it much clearer who is responsible for the collection and administration of our tax system by appointing a Tax minister.

Our Tax minister's brief will be to simplify the tax system and to ensure that its administration is as efficient as possible whilst also putting a face on a system that is often seen as faceless, bureaucratic and unfair.

Require subsidy matching

Many industries that are essential to the United Kingdom (including rail, water, electricity generation and supply, gas supply and other utilities) have been privatised in recent decades, but continue to rely on massive government subsidy for infrastructure investment. These private organisations then take millions in support whilst continuing to provide dividends to their shareholders and massive pay and benefits to their senior staff.

We believe that this is unfair. Where the government spends the taxpayers' money to ensure the delivery of an essential service, the taxpayer should expect to see a return for their money before private investors are paid dividends. Senior management should have their wages capped.

In addition we will propose that any government subsidy or grant to a profit-making company for the delivery of services should be met pound-for-pound by private investment.

Carry out trademark reform

All trademarks should be equal in law. There should be no special exceptions for particular trademarks or organisations, and special protection for Olympic related marks should be removed.

Move toward a Citizens Income

Instead of bailing out banks, and channelling money through them to increase spending in the economy, help needs to get directly to those who are creating new ideas and new jobs. However, it is not just a question of creating any old jobs; the focus of our economy should be jobs with a living wage. A vast number of people in the UK are paid less than what is required to live above poverty levels in their area. These people then need government support, essentially providing a subsidy for employers.

We would lift these people out of the poverty trap, firstly by ensuring that the minimum wage is a living wage wherever you live in the UK, and secondly by

unifying and simplifying the benefits system with the eventual aim of implementing a Citizens Income for all British citizens.

Civil Liberties

It often feels like we live in a "say no first, ask questions later" society. Whether it's councils banning a 9 year old from blogging about school dinners or the government threatening to suspend social media, the Pirate Party has always stood up for freedom of speech. The courts must not be used to block freedom of expression and knowledge, and a reform of libel laws is overdue to ensure this. The right to speak out is fundamental in democracy.

We must protect the right to protest, assemble and strike.

We do have the right to protect our private and family life. Wanting privacy is not a suspicious activity. The government is reviving Labour's plan to track all our email, web and phone contacts in a blanket 'snoopers' charter'. This is a wasteful intrusion. The £2 billion cost should be invested in digital infrastructure instead of surveillance of people's personal lives.

Everyone has a right to private and confidential communication. To ensure that, we need to introduce stronger data protection laws, and require companies that hold personal information to be clearer with data subjects about their rights and to apply a reasonable level of security to data.

Most importantly, it is time to claim back the 'commons', even on privately owned land that is used publicly. We have the right to gather and enjoy our shared spaces and we should be free from arbitrary restrictions and intrusions if we wish to do so. We want to see a rolling back of the more authoritarian excesses of the last few governments, including a review of terrorism legislation and laws designed to limit a specific type of behaviour, but that now have an impact on every day life and have come to threaten us all.

Support those who expose wrongdoing

The Pirate Party has shown its commitment to whistleblowers by being the only party to actively and consistently support Wikileaks. We will stand up for the rights of any whistleblower.

We recognise the value of whistleblowers to society and we will defend the right of citizens to expose illegal practices in the workplace and elsewhere. We will introduce stronger protections for whistleblowers. Exposing corrupt or illegal activities must take precedence over contract law and copyright law, and no-one should fear persecution for making the public aware of a breach of the law.

Reform libel law to bolster free speech

English and Scottish defamation law both need a thorough overhaul. At present they present an unacceptable risk to free speech. We will make it clear that the truth is an absolute defence against any defamation claim and significantly reduce the burden and costs faced by defendants in defamation cases.

Respect privacy

The privacy of the individual should be respected at all times.

We feel that citizens' right to private and confidential communication is vital, but at present it is not respected. We will forbid third parties from intercepting or monitoring communication traffic (i.e. telephone calls, post, Internet traffic, emails), and require specific warrants to be issued by a court before the police are allowed to monitor communications traffic.

We will ensure that the freedom to encrypt data and communications is not abridged or limited and that access to the tools that make secure communications easier is not restricted.

We will significantly strengthen data protection laws, ensuring that companies holding personal information give data subjects more information about their rights; apply a standardised minimum level of security to data; and are clear about their policies on data retention and amendment.

Civil Liberties

We will make it easier to apply to a court for compensation where data protection laws have been breached, and increase the penalties for any breaches of data protection laws. We will allow the courts to apply these penalties to both the individuals and companies responsible, proportionally to the scale of the breach.

We will insist that searches of personal property should only be done with reasonable suspicion of a serious criminal offence, and that any targeted surveillance requires a warrant. We will also introduce an annual independent audit of all cases in which surveillance is used, using the results to ensure that any legislation that allows intrusive acts is no broader than absolutely required and is used appropriately.

We will introduce laws on the acceptable use of CCTV cameras in both public and private spaces. While we recognise that there are arguments for the use of CCTV under some circumstances, it should not be considered a replacement for police officers on the beat, and it must not be used as an excuse for unrestricted spying on the public.

We want clearer guidelines and restrictions on the use of DNA records by authorities, to ensure samples are only taken voluntarily, or when there are reasonable grounds to suspect the individual of having committed a serious offence. Samples should be promptly destroyed if the individual is acquitted or not charged with a criminal offence, and they should only be held for the length of time for which there is a reasonable suspicion that the suspect has committed a crime. The guidelines should ensure that we follow European law on removal of DNA records.

Create a formal notion of pseudo-public space

There's very little genuinely public space in the UK; whether you are looking for it online or offline, but there are many places that are private and yet modern life strongly encourages you into, like shopping centres, walkways, parks and open spaces around churches and other buildings.

These spaces have become so important to people, that it is time to recognise that citizens have rights in them, despite being private places.

The Pirate Party intends to define a legal notion of "pseudo-public space" which is space that, while privately owned, has become so woven into the lives of citizens, and so essential to their daily routines, that any rights that they might enjoy in a public place also apply.

Protect the right to protest

The right to protest and express dissent without fear of reprisal is fundamental to a democratic society and the exercise of freedom of speech. The Pirate Party seeks to uphold and protect this right, wherever people wish to make use of it. Withholding labour is also part of the tradition of protest and must also be protected.

Require court order for any covert surveillance

Any body, including the police, should be required to obtain a court order in order to perform any covert surveillance of specific individuals. Where obtaining a warrant would prevent the police acting on an immediate threat or pursuing a lead in an investigation, a court order should be obtained alongside the ongoing surveillance and, if denied, the subject of the surveillance must be informed. The court order required should be proportional to the amount of surveillance, the degree of the suspected offence and the amount of evidence against the individual.

Repeal bad laws

We know that there are many issues with the law in the UK, including laws that are either overly broad, poorly defined, or used for purposes for which they were not intended. There are a number of obvious and grave issues that we would like to address as soon as possible.

Civil Liberties

We will repeal sections 63-66 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, These overly broad powers targeted at rave culture are targeted solely at electronic and dance music and allow police officers to arrest any individual they believe might be on their way to a rave within a certain area.

We will repeal section 49 of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA). Section 49 of RIPA makes it illegal to not surrender encryption keys when a notice is served, allowing a penalty of up to 2 years in jail.

Although this was originally a counter-terrorism law, it has been widely applied. A further section of the act (54) stops you telling anyone about the request for information from the moment you are given the notice.

We will repeal sections 142-149 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. In a democratic society it is absurd that there are restrictions on protest in and around the seat of government. We will remove specific provisions prohibiting protest around Westminster.

We will conduct a review of the Communications Act Section 127. Clarification of elements of the Communications Act are required to ensure that it is brought into line with how people use the Internet and modern electronic communications. We should not live in a country where people are arrested for making jokes on social media platforms.



We will conduct a review of the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005'. When it was initially enacted, measures in the Act were opposed by a number of human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, JUSTICE and Liberty. Criticism of the Act included complaints about the range of restrictions that could be imposed, the use of closed proceedings and special advocates to hear secret evidence against

detainees, and the possibility that evidence against detainees may include evidence obtained in other countries by torture.

Whilst some of these objections have been addressed, the issues they present remain. A thorough review of terrorism legislation is again needed to ensure that we have the right powers to deal with the threat, rather than simply broader powers that leave us all a little bit less free.

Restoring Trust In Government

Our democracy is in real danger. All too few people take part and vote. It's time to reverse the trend of just a few people calling the shots. This has to start with trusting young people and bringing in voting from 16. All the main parties promised us long overdue reform of the House of Lords, but seem unable to act due to Westminster bickering. Let's all be involved in working out how we want to be governed, based on equality and fair representation. When all else fails constituents should be able to force a by-election if they have lost confidence in their MP.

It is time to end the "pass the buck culture". It should be transparent who is responsible for which decisions and who will take responsibility when there are problems. We all take responsibility for our actions; it is time that those in government did so too.

We can't ask you to trust the government, but we can promise to work to make government more trustworthy. We should expand 'open data's. Government and council information that concerns us should be shared with us. If our government fails us, people should have the right to expose it and we should protect the rights of whistleblowers.

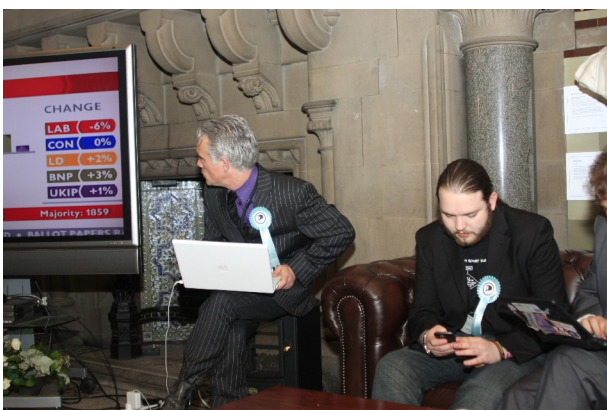
Freedom of Information laws must be protected, strengthened and expanded. The 'right to know' should apply wherever our money is being spent and that must include private contractors. We've seen how outsourcing can let us down with G4S security for the Olympics, so it is important that it is possible to renegotiate contracts or get rid of suppliers when they fail us.

Increase government transparency and accountability.

We will introduce a new right for constituents to force a by-election in the event of a loss of confidence in their MP.

We will require minutes of all meetings of officials on government business to be accessible through Freedom of Information requests. We will also aim to ensure that all available information that could be requested under a Freedom of Information request is made public by default.

We will require that all international treaties be passed through the UK parliament as a standard bill, requiring the full approval of both houses.



Votes at 16

Everyone is affected by government policy, but the disparity between representation and responsibility is greatest between those aged 16, who cannot vote, and those aged 18 who can.

Everything from education policy through to health and social policy can have an immediate effect on 16 year olds who have no say in who represents them at a national and local level. At 16 a person can join the Army, but not vote. A 16 year old can work, but not vote. A 16 year old is old enough to be tried in a court and punished for breaking the law, but cannot vote.

Reducing the voting age will also increase the political and democratic engagement of young people. Getting younger people involved in the national debate early, ensuring that they have a stake and a say, should improve the political discourse more broadly.

Implement proportional representation

We see proportional representation as vital to ensuring that government properly represents everyone, and that everyone's voice matters in elections. We intend to restart the national debate and push for a system of proportional representation to be implemented for all elections in the UK.

Require sensible service contracts

Private for-profit transport providers have on occasion managed to renegotiate contracts with local and national authorities in order to reduce losses and costs when times have got tougher. These moves are almost always taken in order to protect profits and sometimes occur shortly after being awarded a franchise. This has led to poorer service to the communities that these providers serve and has harmed the reputation of local and national governments. We will ensure that private companies that bid to provide public services are held accountable for any breaches of contract.

Rate all spending in pounds per QALY

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence uses the "Quality Adjusted Life year" (QALY) as a measure of how much good a drug does. To be approved, the drug must buy at least one QALY for each £30,000 spent.

We aim to trial the use of pounds per QALY in areas outside of health as an aid in decision making, with a view to rolling it out across all areas of government if it is successful. Using a uniform measure across defence, policing, education and all other areas of spending would give the public and government an idea as to where money can be best spent to achieve a rapid benefit. We believe that making explicit the estimates that go into justifying spending might give better results than hiding justifications or using less evidence based methods.

Aim for a balanced budget

Whilst not achievable in the very short term, we support the fact that the UK needs a balanced budget rather than continuous deficit spending.

Make parliament work

To improve the quality of legislation we wish to see a much higher level of pre-legislative scrutiny for every bill before parliament.

We would investigate measures intended to reduce the power of the Whips in the Commons.

We would investigate the possibility of permanent elected legislative committees for each government department in the Commons rather than ad hoc public bill committees. There are a number of approaches that could work in this area and we would aim to trial a number of options to decide which is likely to be the most effective.

We would implement the rest of the Wright report by creating a House business committee in the Commons and the recommendations of the Goodlad report in full for the Lords. As well as implementing a House business committee in the Lords and having an evidence-taking stage for all bills in addition to pre-legislative scrutiny.

We would limit the use rules to restrict debate in the Commons to cases of actual abuse of the rules of the House.

We would roll out post-legislative scrutiny on all important policy-changing bills before new bills on the same subject are to be considered.

We would require the maintenance of a register of lobbyists as well as a record of all meetings between lobbyists and legislators or government officials.

Full disclosure of government deals with corporations

The detail of the *government's deals and agreements with suppliers and other businesses* should be disclosed. It is not acceptable that the government should be allowed to protect information regarding its commercial activities on the basis of confidentiality.

Independent public spending reviews

An independent audit of public sector spending and processes should be carried out annually, with bi-annual review of spending to identify where spending reductions or greater returns are possible without reducing the overall effectiveness of the public sector.

Democratise the City of London

We support the democratisation of the City of London. Given the City's huge impact on the UK it is important that it is accountable and transparent. We support an end to business and corporate block votes in all council elections; the abolition of existing "secrecy practices" within the City, and total and transparent reform of its institutions to end corporate tax evasion; the decommissioning of the City of London police with officers being brought under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan police force; and the abolition of the offices of the Lord Mayor of London, the Sheriffs and the Aldermen.

Finally, we support a commission to examine any corruption, malpractice, or illegal activities within the City or its institutions with the aim of preventing any similar future abuses as well as ensuring that justice is done and seen to be done.

Reform the House of Lords

Reform of the House of Lords is necessary to ensure that the Lords remains relevant and effective as an expert body, and acts as a proper check on the activities of the Commons. However the scope, scale and specifics of any reform are something that needs to be discussed at length and in public. We all have a stake in the future shape of our democracy.

We intend to start a national discussion about the shape of the Lords and how it can be improved without damaging the work that the Lords does.

Demand accountability from government suppliers.

The delivery of services to government is littered with stories of companies exceeding budgets and delivering late. We will implement penalties for significant performance failures for government suppliers. If a company fails to deliver a government within 25% of budget or 25% of the deadline then that company (its parent organisations and subsidiaries) would be banned from providing services or products to the government for at least 2 years.

Education

We should have an education system for all. University tuition fees burden students with debt and act as a barrier to access and success. They must be frozen and reversed. Class size guidelines must be enforced for all ages, and schools should be under local democratic control. Free Schools should not be under government control, but have council supervision and local representation on boards. Teachers must be free to focus on teaching, and not bogged down by administration.

We want to see a national curriculum that is about the "what", but not "how", so that schools and teachers can teach in a way that best benefits the student. Above all, we need to educate a generation of innovators, not idle consumers.

It is important that in an increasingly digital world Computer Science is available in schools. Children should not be just learning how to use specific software, but how to use the tools and technology that we all now have available to us. At all levels, real world experience and partnerships outside of the classroom and lecture hall should be a core part of learning.

We will encourage the adoption of free and open source software in schools, ensuring that children aren't reliant on using a particular software package from a particular company and that schools aren't locked into using a particular vendor.

Education should be lifelong. Everyone should have a Personal Investment Allowance. If you don't go in to further or higher education straight away, you should be able to do so later in life, when you need new skills or want to change career. The aim of our schools must be rounded development, not learning for exams.

We need to look at what has worked elsewhere too. Scandinavian style 'high schools', which offer 6 month residential courses before higher education without exams to develop students abilities and desire to learn, would provide real benefits to students and the country at large. Alternative methods of grading GCSEs and A-levels, such as percentile based systems, should be explored to make the system fairer and more transparent.

Abolish university tuition fees

Labour introduced them, the Tories and Lib Dems have increased them too. We will abolish them.

Lifetime access to education

The best time to learn is in the earliest years, but for many people life events can mean that they miss out on education, or due to personal issues they may be incapable of taking full advantage of the education available to them up to the age of 18. We are committed to providing easy access to both basic education and higher education for all; we believe that the UK can build on the excellent foundations already laid by the Open University. University tuition fees should be frozen and eventually scrapped.

Tuition fees have a disproportionately negative effect on students from poorer backgrounds, and act as a barrier to intelligent and willing young people's development to their full academic potential. We believe that a freeze in tuition fees is necessary until a workable grant based, free, or means tested alternative funding method can be agreed on and implemented.

Reduce class sizes

Class sizes have a measurable impact on the performance of students of all ages. We would set a maximum class size, not as a guideline, but as a requirement for all schools within the UK with exceptions for schools where parents and governors actively want to see larger class sizes and are using some other methods to mitigate any negative impact.

Invest in teachers

Schools should have the freedom to spend their budgets as they see fit and should be encouraged to invest in knowledgeable, enthusiastic and well qualified teachers. Over the last decade we have seen vast sums wasted on expensive school IT systems, often with maintenance, software licensing and other excessive or unnecessary costs attached. To make matters worse, schools are often locked into these costly systems for long periods, reducing schools' abilities to adapt to new technology and provide the best education to their students. An effort needs to be made to ensure that schools are aware of and can collaborate on the use of free and open source software, which could save significant amounts of money within education and redirect it back to teaching.

Abolish requirement for collective worship in schools

As it stands, the law requires all schools to hold an act of collective worship every day. Even in schools that aren't 'faith' schools, this must be 'broadly Christian' in character. In a society which is increasingly diverse, this is an affront to the rights of young people to express their beliefs freely. Although there is the opportunity to opt out, this is reliant on parental permission and is not respected by all schools. The law is extremely unpopular, with opinion polls showing teachers don't want it, parents don't want it, and children don't want it. As such, it is long past time for the daily act of collective worship to be replaced with inclusive assemblies that add to cohesion and a sense of community within schools. We should encourage schools to hold educational assemblies that will include all children, regardless of religion or non-religious belief.

Let all schools access a national media library

The BBC, National Archives and other appropriate groups should be asked to establish a national media library for educational establishments. A large catalogue of material for students and teachers to make use of would diversify and increase the quality of media material available in education and would save money by centralising administration and technical costs.

Make publicly funded academic research available to all

We believe that it is vital that the results of academic research produced in universities that receive public money should be available to all, in accordance with the Budapest Open Access Initiative.

We support the existing government policy that all academic research funded or partially funded by the taxpayer via the UK Research Councils is published under a CC-BY license.

We will ensure that the policy is enforced, and encourage the research councils to set up central subject-specific repositories similar to the UKPubMed database for deposit of manuscripts.

Reduce the school leaving age

We will investigate making education after the age of 14 voluntary. An initial trial where any 14-year-old who can pass a GCSE in Maths and English should be permitted to pursue a job or apprenticeship offer, with the option of returning to school if they lose their placement or would prefer to return to education.

This would allow young people who want to start working early or specialise as apprentices to remove themselves from classes, freeing up time and resources for those who would prefer to continue in education.

Switch to a percentile-based grading system

We will assess the effectiveness of a percentile based grading system to avoid grade inflation, to minimise the impact of arbitrary changes to grading criteria, and to ensure that exam results remain comparable in the long term.

'Set up a business' experience

We will trial a programme where 16-year-olds are encouraged to set up a small business as part of a work experience programme during or at the end of their final year of school. The programme would aim to actually establish viable businesses and provide the skills and experience required to run a small business.



Teach entrepreneurial skills in schools

Schools should prepare children for life after education. With the support of school governors and parents, schools should have the option of providing entrepreneurial skills as part of their curriculum.

In our current economic system it is important that children to learn about competition, taking risks and strategy.

Reinstate the Education Maintenance Allowance in England

The Education Maintenance Allowance should be reinstated until a broader and tested alternative can be introduced to ensure that 16 to 18-year-olds in low-income families who are staying on at school can afford to study for A-levels. This would bring England back in line with in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Have a national curriculum that says 'What' but not 'How'

Schools should have the freedom to choose the teaching methods and materials they feel are most effective to ensure that their students are well equipped once they have completed their education. Decisions about what is taught and how should be as local as possible in all instances, and limitations on local decision making should be kept to a minimum.

Eliminate school rankings by GCSE or SAT results

Schools must aim to educate, not to simply pass exams. The number of examinations that young people sit should be reduced, and schools should be judged on a broad range of indicators. Moreover, the examinations that young people sit should be appropriate to their aims and future development. Schools should not push students toward particular subjects or qualifications for any reason other than the students' wishes and abilities. The public ranking of schools by GCSE or SAT results should be discontinued.

Health

We must secure the NHS for now and the future. Instead of dogma, the NHS should be about what works. There should be no compulsion to outsource services if they can be more effectively or cheaply provided in house. Doctors must not be burdened with administration. They must be allowed to focus on patients. There must be complete transparency about the decision making for our health service; the risk register must be published. If we are going to have a cost effective health service available to all, then it must no longer be a blank cheque for big pharmaceutical companies. We should end drug patents and use the money saved to invest in research and reversing cuts.

We can all make positive choices about our own health. To help, food labelling should be as clear and easily understandable as possible. Advice on getting healthy should also be available easily, without bias from companies that seek to make money from fitness fads and dietary supplements. We must make sure the ill are not exploited, and crack down on misleading quack and 'miracle' cures.

The use of recreational drugs should be seen as a health issue and the NHS is best placed to help in tackling addiction, educating, and reducing harm to individuals. This approach must be evidence lead, not subject to knee-jerk reactions or election year promises.

We will not support any charges for access to healthcare, nor could we support any other measure that makes access to care more difficult for people. Our aim should be to help people see a doctor or nurse when they need to, and have access to vaccinations and preventative care. It will keep us healthier and reduce costs. The health of our young people needs to be protected. Vaccination schemes should be broadened where it is effective, for instance giving the HPV vaccine to boys as is now recommended.

Securing the NHS for now and the future

The Pirate Party will require that any legislative, administrative or other changes to the NHS do not have a negative impact on the NHS's primary principles: that it meet the needs of everyone; that it be free at the point of delivery; and that it be based on clinical need, not ability to pay.

Changes to the NHS should be based upon evidence, not ideology. Changes should come from within the health establishment and the NHS wherever possible, with evolutionary change driven by a continuous, democratic and open discussion within the service.

Where the government is planning privatisation or permitting private provision of services we will ensure that transparency be at least equal to the scrutiny that the public provision it replaces was subject to. Contracts must ensure that delivery costs are guaranteed with penalties for failure and contingencies to ensure continuity of care.

Health provision is something that should be available to everyone. Like scientific ideas and culture, it is something that should be seen as part of the commons because without it people's freedom to act is limited and pressures can be placed on individuals based on the cost or availability of healthcare, limiting freedom of action and potentially freedom of expression and association.

Abolishing drug patents

We aim to abolish drug patents, which will reduce drug costs drastically, since all drugs would become generic. This innovation would save the NHS vast sums of money; part of that saving will then be used to subsidise drug research.

The pharmaceutical industry currently spends around 15% of its patent drug income on research; we would support that expenditure with subsidies made possible in savings from the NHS. This will increase research budgets, while still saving the NHS money.

Health

This policy of making all drugs generic will create a massive opportunity for industry to make profits, employ more people and save lives by encouraging the manufacture of newly generic drugs in this country for sale to the third world.

Administration by administrators, medicine from medical staff

Given the complexity of running a hospital and the amount of time involved in administration, administrative staff, must be seen as important to ensuring that doctors, nurses and other medical staff can focus on patient care, rather than being seen as a burden. Although NHS resources and spending must be scrutinised and transparent, it is important not to harm services by removing administrative staff and shifting the administrative burden to front-line staff.

Bring appropriate support services back into the NHS

The general public broadly trusts the NHS to deliver services. We all trust the NHS with our lives. In return for that trust, the NHS should ensure that it is using the funds apportioned to it as effectively as possible, even when an effective service isn't the cheapest option.

All the skills to deliver healthcare from start to finish, from cleaning to surgery and from transport to transplants, should be available within the NHS.

Widen public access to Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CCBT)

A trial to make computerised cognitive behavioural therapy (CCBT) freely accessible by anyone via the Internet should be undertaken. This resource is available already through the NHS, but you must be referred by a GP to gain access. If found to be effective it would allow anyone who feels they may benefit by access to do so. This may help people who are reluctant to go to their GP over mental health concerns get the help they need online for free while maintaining complete anonymity.

Address LGBT health challenges

LGBT people face multiple serious health challenges. The Pirate Party aims to follow the lead of countries like Norway that have comprehensive LGBT public health plans with clear goals. We also need to end the stigma around HIV/AIDS and initiate a national campaign to normalise HIV testing as a routine part of caring for our health.

Equality in blood donation

Restrictions on blood donations from men who have sex with men should be lifted. The focus must be on individual screening and making sure as many people as possible can donate blood and save lives.

Deal with drug abuse as a health issue

The abuse of illegal and legal drugs is a health issue, and it should be treated as such. Abusers of drugs should be provided with care, advice and assistance to prevent or reduce dependency, as well as support to ensure that they can operate effectively within society. For these reasons, and because the NHS largely deals with the negative consequences of substance abuse, it would make sense for the NHS to take the lead in both research and providing advice in all areas of drug policy, from the medicinal use of marijuana to the impact or dangers of new recreational drug

An evidence based approach to alcohol education

Our current alcohol education methods create the negative response to drinking alcohol. An evidence based approach to educating young people about alcohol and the impact it would both improve education and make it more likely for those who find that alcohol has a negative impact on their lives to seek help.

Environment

We need smart policy to improve our environment. We support bringing in a bottle return scheme (paying for a deposit on bottles and cans which is given back when they are returned). This would reduce litter and the burden on recycling facilities, as well as changing attitudes towards our precious resources.

The environmental challenges, from climate change to dealing with 'grotspots', are monumental. They require changes in all parts of our economy and in our behaviour, but if we work together we can deal with both. Litter is more than a blight on our landscape; it is an indication of wasted resources. We can work together to improve the areas where we live and at the same time deal with a threat to our world. Using new technologies for power generation and to fuel our cars will help a great deal too; we want to see investment in British engineering to bring about the changes and technology that we need.

Open spaces must be protected, land ownership must be transparent, our common heritage maintained and developers made to act responsibly. It is time for a fair environment policy. There should be a new focus on littered and polluted "problem" areas, and a more proactive Environment Agency.

Cycling should be seen as part of our transport system. To get more people in to the saddle, we should separate cyclists from other traffic where possible and ensure that cycling directions are part of transport information. Adult and child cycling classes should be available. Walking should also be seen as part of a truly comprehensive transport strategy.

Part of looking after our environment and having a dynamic economy is having a well-functioning public transport system. There must be no more private profit at public expense on our railways. If taxpayers invest, investment must be matched by rail operators, and we need to see a return. When assessing rail performance, overcrowding and affordability should be taken into proper consideration. Ticket pricing needs to be transparent, easy to understand, and work between different forms of transport. We can get Britain moving.

Bottle return scheme

A bottle return scheme is a charge added to the price on a bottled drink that you get back if you return said bottle to a certified outlet (essentially a deposit). We will trial the implementation of bottle return scheme schemes in the UK with a view to making them mandatory across the UK if they are found to be as effective in the UK as they have been in Germany and other countries. Bottle return schemes change the social landscape in other ways, too: bottles aren't left in the street, and if they are someone comes and picks them up, if only for the deposit. This ensures that there is less waste, more reuse and fewer glass hazards in public areas.

The polluter pays

We believe that if you damage the environment, it is your responsibility to pay for that damage to be reversed. The air around us, our waterways, and our landscapes are all common property. If they are damaged though an accident or through activity that pollutes, then that damage should be fixed. The government has a duty to ensure that those who cause such damage pay to do so. In the event that damage is global, as with climate change, it is doubly important to ensure that damaging activities are kept to a minimum and that funds are raised to deal with the consequences. It is also vitally important that we invest in research and technology to reduce the amount of damage that we do to our environment in the first place.

Investing in offshore wind and tidal power

Power generation will be a major issue facing the UK in the coming decade. The next government will have to put to get an effective and environmentally sound policy to deal with increasing generation capacity. We believe that the focus should be on renewable energy (such as offshore wind and tidal power generation) as well as investigating and developing new technologies, including nuclear, and continuing to improve the effectiveness of existing ones.

Mandatory "carbon footprint" labelling for big-ticket items

We should require that carbon footprint ratings are extended and applied on more products, especially those that have large carbon footprints when created. These items should then be labelled when sold.

Adopt the Passive House standard for all new buildings

The Passive House standard requires a house to be so well constructed and insulated that it is warm enough without requiring much heating; typically it will require no heating at all.

30,000 passive houses have been built around the world and the UK should work to catch up. We will aim to ensure that all new houses built in the UK adhere to a reasonable standard that is as close to the Passive House standard in terms of aims as possible.

Justice

A justice system that isn't available to everyone is not a justice system at all. The current trend towards setting up barriers to access is worrying, and we want to see it stopped. Cuts to legal aid must be reversed, to preserve access for the most vulnerable in our society. Instead, legal fees should be capped.

We deserve an impartial justice system, accountable police officers and a fair system for dealing with those convicted of offences.

Public consent is the cornerstone of such a justice system. Much is made of community policing, but priorities need to be set with the whole community, not just a few people. Consultation and involvement needs to be more inclusive, seeking out groups who are under-represented. Agreed priorities should be updated regularly and set out clearly. CCTV is becoming ever more intrusive and expensive, but it is far from effective. Money wasted on cameras should be used to reverse police cuts.

There should not be any political interference in the everyday working of the police, and the expensive Tory imposed police commissioners should be abolished. The CPS and Director of Public Prosecution's duty to consider public interest in prosecutions should be strengthened. We must see an end to costly and unnecessary cases like the Twitter Joke Trial. An action plan should be prepared on how to reduce deaths in custody and through contacts with the police.

Unjust extradition arrangements must also be reworked to protect our citizens from disproportionate and inappropriate requests from foreign governments. In particular, the current UK-US treaty is weighted against British citizens, and is due for change to protect us all.

Reverse legal aid cuts

Justice should be equal for all in the UK, and that includes access to justice, regardless of income or background. The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill will cut millions from the Legal Aid budget leaving victims out in the cold. The Pirate Party will reverse cuts to legal aid brought in by the LASPO bill, affecting domestic violence, immigration, employment, debt, welfare benefit, divorce, and welfare benefits.

Maintain independence of the Judiciary, CPS and the Police

Politicians should pass laws that they feel appropriate, but it should be the role of the police and judges to act independently, neither aiming to influence nor being swayed by political or popular pressures. The limiting of the independence of judges, and the curtailment of their ability to make the right judgement and to pass appropriate sentences on cases that come before them can and does constitute an injustice. The police should act on the basis of priorities that are right for the areas in which they are operating. They should not be pushed to prioritise their resources or change the way they police on the basis of political demands.

Ensure the police are effective

The number of police officers should reflect the needs of the area in which they operate. However, every police force should have the resources to ensure that police officers are both highly visible and available when they are needed. The numbers and balance of Police Community Support Officers and Police Officers in every force area should be sufficient to achieve that goal.

No to Police Commissioners

The election of Police Commissioners will be a step backward for justice in Britain. Whilst we support the idea that those individuals entrusted with upholding and enforcing the law should be open to public scrutiny, we do not believe that they should be elected to their offices and subject to political pressure. The Pirate Party will abolish Police Commissioners.

Improve the rehabilitation of offenders

We will introduce significant reforms to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. The current recidivism rate in the UK is around 50%, in part due to discrimination against former prisoners after release. The Pirate Party will propose removing the requirement to declare spent criminal convictions and toughen legislation making it illegal to discriminate against people with spent convictions.

Make extradition fair

No extradition should be permitted where a British Judge deems that an extradition would not be in the interests of justice. We will ensure that British judges have the power to halt an extradition until they were satisfied that a case is trial-ready, as well as the power to refuse extradition where the country seeking extradition is clearly not the appropriate place for trial.

We would also seek clearer rules to deal with cases where there is a multinational aspect to ensure cases are handled transparently and fairly.

Justice

We would address the perceived imbalance in the US-UK extradition treaty by requiring that the standards for extradition being granted and the information required to assess each case

are the same whether an extradition request comes from the US or the UK. Any extradition treaty must not only be fair, but be seen to be fair.

Social Policy

Everyone should have the opportunity to be equally involved in society.

Discrimination on the basis of age, such as the lower minimum wage bracket for 18 to 20 year olds and the bias against young people in the welfare system, is divisive and unhelpful. There should also be greater and more balanced parental leave to support those in the crucial first stages of starting a family. Helping people so that they can help themselves is the right thing to do, and much more cost effective than leaving them out.

In the UK we still face problems with discrimination on the basis of age, race, gender and sexual orientation either in law or in practice. It is time to change that. Equality is vital for a healthy society, and given that the tax system doesn't discriminate, social policy shouldn't either. Simple but significant changes, like allowing equal LGBT marriage, are important and achievable.

Instead of writing people off, we need to think creatively and help people to find their own solutions. We should pilot a mentoring programme, matching young people not in education or employment with older people finding the next stage in their career, bridging the generation gap for mutual benefit.

Any new legislation or regulation should be for a good reason and based on sound evidence. Proposals like alcohol price hikes, which we oppose, don't even have the benefit of having a clear intent, or any evidence to show what they are likely to achieve. Instead they will restrict businesses and our leisure.

Sure Start

We must protect Sure Start services. It is vitally important that all children get the best possible start in life, but that alone isn't sufficient in dealing with the problems that the UK faces. The rationale under which Sure Start Children's Centres were set up should be extended, not rolled back. They have made life easier for millions of families and could improve lives further. Sure Start should be about actively bringing down the levels of child poverty in the UK, not just a start in life, and should provide ongoing support for whole families.

A rational points based immigration system

The demand for certain skills that are in short supply in the UK has made immigration vitally important for both the public and the private sector. Well-managed and well-controlled immigration is important to ensure that the UK remains competitive and innovative. We will therefore ensure that immigration is well managed by ensuring that record keeping related to entry into and departure from the UK is suitable. Without detailed information about the flow of people into and out of the country it will become difficult to ensure that the areas where immigrants are settling are able to cope with both changes in the level of demand and changes in demographics.

Immigration applications should be considered not only on the basis of what skills an immigrant brings to his sponsor and whether an applicant is able to support themselves without any recourse to public funds, but also where the applicant is intending to live and work.

Alter the method by which ESA is assessed

The current mechanism used to determine eligibility for the 'Employment and Support Allowance' is failing many people who are in dire need of support. We would call for an immediate review of the assessment methods used and look for alternative ways to administrate assessments.

Digital Accessibility

We will promote the inclusion of accessibility features, such as subtitles and audio descriptions for the disabled. Our aim is to make content accessible for disabled people.

We will introduce an obligation for publishers to provide a DRM-free copy of their product where necessary to allow the use of accessibility programs (for example, voice synthesiser software to "read out" an e-book to a visually impaired person).

A fairer deal for Interns

We will ensure that the minimum wage applies to interns gaining experience within for-profit companies to limit the impact of abuses of the intern system.

End age discrimination in the benefits system

At present people under 25 receive a lower level of Job Seekers Allowance and people under 35 receive a lower level of housing benefit than older people. Both of these examples of age discrimination should be removed from the benefits system. Everyone who is no longer in full time education and has not yet reached retirement age should be treated equally.

Raise the minimum wage to a living wage

We would aim to ensure that the minimum wage is sufficient incentive to work and allow autonomy without reliance on tax credits and low-income benefits, that requires that the minimum wage also be a living wage. At present the taxpayer subsidises employers by providing means tested benefits to working people on wages so low that they would not be able to survive if they did not have recourse to benefits.

Efficiently process asylum seekers and treat them properly

Quite rightly, the UK is a party to international agreements pertaining to asylum. We have an obligation to provide sanctuary to those individuals who have been forced to flee their homes. We should ensure that those people who come to the UK seeking asylum are treated fairly and are given decisions quickly about their status. Once asylum seekers have been granted asylum they should be given assistance to ensure that their time in the UK is productive and beneficial to them and the UK, including access to employment and education.

Review laws relating to sex workers

The legalisation and regulation of activities around prostitution, especially brothels, would protect the workers and remove a significant revenue stream from criminals. If properly regulated, it would enable regular health checks to help stop spread of STDs and ensure better working conditions for those involved.

Moving toward a Citizen's Income

A Citizen's Income is an unconditional, non-withdrawable income payable to each individual as a right of citizenship.

The idea would be to introduce this income, reduce the amount at which people are taxed and remove some existing tax credits.

Instituting an automatic, non-repayable, non-means-tested and unconditional Citizens Income is a long term aim for the Pirate Party. Such a payment would replace all benefits and tax credits. However there are significant hurdles to the implementation of such a system, including the need for comprehensive research into the social and economic impact it would have and whether it can be affordable. We think it is likely that such a programme is possible but would have to be reached incrementally. As such we propose funding trials to establish how such a system could be implemented.

A Citizens Income would significantly reduce poverty and wealth inequality, and it would help ensure that nobody falls into a poverty or unemployment trap. Importantly, the incentive to work would remain, as getting a job would not remove the Citizens Income, but would raise the amount of money coming in to the household. It would also create flexibility for single parent families, carers, disabled people and people wanting to dedicate their time to community or volunteering programmes, as part-time jobs would become a viable means of support.

As a result, the minimum wage could probably be lowered, the tax code could be simplified and the poorest in society would be safe from a lifetime of poverty.

The Citizens Income would need to be funded through tax increases and would represent significant wealth redistribution, but it would also increase efficiency in supporting everyone and massively reduce the cost of administering and monitoring benefits payments.

The Mutual Mentoring Project (MMP)

We would like to see trial programmes across the UK in which young people are paired with older people and provided with an opportunity to start a business with state support through the provision of space, legal advice and accountancy, preferably in a startup incubator-like space. This would give both young people the opportunity to start a business and work with people who have long term experience, and would support older people who want to start a business but don't have the up-to-date skills required. If a MMP business fails there would still be a measurable benefit from skill transference; if a MMP business succeeds then it would create jobs for all parties involved at the fraction of a cost of long term welfare, and potentially continue to grow.

Balanced and flexible paid parental leave

The UK should introduce balanced and flexible parental leave, to be available to both partners. We would propose a system where both the mother and father of a child each have a minimum amount of time off 'banked', and then an additional allocation to be divided between them, obviously this includes LGBT people too.

Right to marriage regardless of sexuality

All of the UK's citizens should have an equal right to marriage. The implementation of truly equal marriage must not be further delayed or de-prioritised. Equal marriage must mean exactly that. The law must be changed to give full equality to all couples regardless of gender.

Culture

Promoting the right to take part in our shared culture and increasing access to culture is a key Pirate Party aim. Libraries must be protected and developed for the 21st century, increasing the role of digital aspects and taking from the best practices of hacker-spaces and start up hubs. Wherever possible library, archive and museum content should be digitised and made widely available. Copyright exceptions should be made so people with visual impairments and print disabilities can access written material equally.

The place of music and the creative arts in education should be preserved and promoted. Culture should be at the heart of regeneration plans, and initiatives already underway to restore life to our high streets by bringing artists into empty shop spaces should be supported.

Our culture policy is about encouraging research and development in new thinking for our creative lives and the creative economy, not just box ticking and making the arts part of a narrow national agenda. Artists themselves are too often forgotten in the art funding picture; culture funding priorities must be to put artists first, not institutions, buildings or quangos. Let's support art and artists.

Art can be controversial, but it is vital we don't squash freedom of expression. After all, that is what so much of the successful culture of Britain has been about.

It's time to bring laws about how we consume film, music, TV and books into the 21st century. Outdated laws against "format shifting" (moving material you have bought from one device to another, for example a CD to an mp3 player) must go. Copyright terms are massively weighted against the public and must be rebalanced. We want to see a focussing of income on living, productive artists and encourage innovation. Audio books and e-books should also be zero VAT rated, to encourage more competitive pricing and the spread of knowledge.

Digitise library and museum content

We will encourage and support libraries, museums and other organisations that hold collections of artefacts or materials to digitise their content and make it available online, in open formats, wherever possible. This will both preserve access to culturally important artefacts and increase accessibility. We would prioritise the digitisation of especially rare items.

Revitalise libraries

In the age of the e-book it is important that we continue to find additional roles for libraries within our communities and increase their relevance for everyone. We will trial borrowing from the best elements of the hacker-space, and the maker movement, student unions, and citizen science initiatives such as Café Scientifique to bolster the reach libraries have in their local communities.

Abolish anti-circumvention restrictions and laws

Under current copyright law it is unlawful to do various things aimed at circumventing effective technological measures that restrict access to copyrighted material, even if doing so is required for lawful use. This includes both civil liabilities and criminal offences. In the event that such a “technological measure” prevents permitted acts (i.e. what could be lawfully done anyway), the only current remedy is to apply to the Secretary of State for a permit.

The Pirate Party seeks to abolish these laws, making it legal both to circumvent “effective technological measures” and produce, distribute and possess tools to aid in doing so. This would not change existing copyright, law, merely remove the extra layer of illegality.

Allow the use of Commons video footage for satire

We would seek to remove restrictions from broadcasters on satirising footage of Parliamentary proceedings. Comedy can bring politics to a wider audience and we believe that MPs' and peers' actions in such an official forum should not be immune from humourous criticism.

Exempt parody from copyright

UK copyright law currently does not currently provide for an exception for parody, pastiche or caricature. Anybody creating or distributing such a work is potentially liable for copyright infringement. We will implement the recommendation of the Hargreaves Report that an an exception for parody in UK copyright law should be introduced in order to reduce the cost and 'chilling effect' associated with relying on existing case law.

Remove VAT from e-books

Paper books are free from VAT yet e-books are not. A book should be defined by what it provides not the material that is used to produce it, and any tax on books is a tax on reading. Like paper books, e-books should be zero-rated for VAT as soon as possible. We will remove VAT from e-books.

Artist centred culture policy and funding model

Artists should be the focus of culture sector funding, this is where the research and development of the creative industries happens. Success in increasing and protecting money going to artists, rather than administration or overheads, must be one of the key performance indicators of National Portfolio Organisations.

Defence

Defence of the realm is a primary responsibility of government. The United Kingdom must be able to meet its own defence needs as well as its obligations to defend overseas territories and allies. Whilst we are not in favour of so-called 'pre-emptive defence' or an aggressive defence posture, we realise that the UK must be ready to respond to aggression or threats to our way of life. We firmly believe that our Armed Forces must be well equipped with the appropriate equipment for the tasks we ask them to undertake, and trained for the roles in which they find themselves.

The British Armed Forces are rightly regarded as the best in the world, and we must ensure that we take care of them to the best of our ability and use them only when absolutely necessary. All members of the Armed Forces should be secure in the knowledge that the country will not desert them once they complete their terms of service.

Focus spending on conventional forces

We believe that whilst a limited nuclear deterrent is important, the UK's military spending should be focused on our conventional forces, especially on forces that can be rapidly deployed. Airborne forces, infantry and other front line units bear the brunt of operations in the 21st century and should be prioritised.



Any like-for-like replacement for Trident should be abandoned and instead a reduced number of our current warheads should have their operational lifespans extended. Further reductions should take place as other countries reduce the number of deliverable weapons they possess.

Nuclear arms reductions

Other countries have nuclear weapons, and some of them might be hostile to Britain at some point in the future. Therefore Britain should keep its nuclear weapons while other countries have them.

While it is unrealistic to expect that the world will abolish nuclear weapons overnight, it is more likely to do so over a longer time scale. To encourage this to happen, and to prevent conventional wars from becoming nuclear wars, the UK should seek to negotiate terms that will strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Defence

We want to see a negotiated global cap on the number of nuclear weapons any treaty nuclear-weapon state may possess, which would automatically reduce every year according to a set schedule. We would aim for provisions to make it attractive for states to not possess nuclear weapons and unattractive for them to possess them, as well as offer confidence-building measures for states that feel threatened by nuclear armed neighbours.

We should strengthen verification measures and inspection routines and ensure they apply equally to all states that possess nuclear weapons.

Logistical capabilities to meet our obligations

The United Kingdom must ensure that its defence logistical capabilities are sufficient to meet the obligations that we have or may be required to undertake. Ensuring that the UK has sufficient independent air and sea-lift capacity is vital. It is important that we are able to operate independently of our allies if necessary.

The Afghan theatre of war

We support the development and implementation of clear, concise and achievable goals for the UK and allied presence in Afghanistan, and the withdrawal of that presence as soon those goals have been met and the situation in the region becomes more stable.

Review and streamline military procurement

We will refocus defence procurement on the UK or joint UK-allied projects. It is vitally important that costs are kept down and that delivery of weapons systems, vehicles, communications systems and other military procurement is both timely and that the delivered product is appropriate to the defined need. We will ensure that our troops have what they need when they need it.

Protect the UK from warfare against computer systems

The UK's computing infrastructure is potentially vulnerable to backdoor attacks, both by hostile states and possibly by non-state actors such as terrorist groups. We would argue that the threat is both large and increasing, and hard to counter.

To ensure that the UK is as ready to deal with any concerted attacks on its infrastructure and information systems it is critical that there is funding for research into the threats we face and how to counter them.

We support the development of an offensive cyber-warfare capability to ensure that we are capable of operating effectively in the event of a conflict.

Given the grave threat that the abuse or misuse of an offensive cyber-warfare capability, including our own, might pose to the UK, we will ensure that there is full transparency of the principles employed in both offensive and defensive cyber-warfare capabilities and spending. We will ensure that there is legislation to prevent the use of military cyber-warfare related equipment or techniques by the government within the UK or against British nationals overseas.

The European Union

Given that self determination is one of the fundamental principles that we believe in, we believe that a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU should be offered to voters in the UK, and that such a referendum should include the option for the UK to pull out of the EU and negotiate its own agreements with the EU as a whole or with individual member states.

The EU should live up to its own principles on subsidiarity and decisions should not be taken at an EU level if they can be better resolved on a national, regional or local level.

It is important that the EU increase it's level of transparency and openness and that these principles should inform the EU's politics, organisation and administration. In the absence of transparency and openness accountability becomes questionable at best and the lack of accountability that is one of our primary concerns with the EU.

To ensure that the European Union is accountable to its members and citizens, it is vital that there is scrutiny of the European Council by national parliaments.

The UK should not adopt the Euro as currency nor aim for it's adoption. No EU member state should be required to join the Euro, or agree to join in future as a requirement of membership. The weaknesses of monetary union in the context of the EU have been made more than clear and without being resolved, it is obvious that some countries, their economies and citizens, would not benefit from closer monetary union.

We will rebalance power within the EU toward elected representatives and away from the Council of Ministers and Commission. For the EU to function properly and in the interests of its members, the influence of anonymous civil servants in the creation of policy must be minimised.

We do not support the imposition of EU data retention laws on the UK, they should be repealed at the EU level and should not be should be implemented in the UK.

We do not support the Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement Directive (IPRED), an attempt by the European Union to increase penalties and eventually criminalise commercial copyright and patent infractions within the EU. IPRED which includes confiscatory and subpoena powers to copyright holders in civil cases should be repealed and attempts to bring forward IPRED2 should be halted.

SWIFT data, passenger records should not be permitted to leave the EU without a concrete suspicion of crime that is punishable within the EU state the data originated.



A Pirate Party activist and Governor, Ed Geraghty, at an event in Sheffield

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